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## F.B.I. Asked to Study Leaks of Data

WASHINGTON, Sept. 28 (UPI) — Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige has asked the Federal Bureau of Investigation to investigate leaks of secret Government economic statistics, the department said today.

The action was taken after publication today by The Washington Post of a breakdown of the elements of the preliminary, or "flash," report on the growth of the gross national product in the third quarter. Although the overall estimate of a 7 percent annual growth rate in the July-September quarter was made public Sept. 21, the figures that supported the estimate were not.

"Leaks of confidential statistics can erode the reputation of the U.S. statistical system — a reputation for honesty and reliability that has been built and maintained for many years," Mr. Baldrige said.

The "flash" is the earliest estimate by the Government of economic growth and is used internally by the Government to gauge tax receipts and expenditures. It is followed after the quarter ends by more complete reports.

The Washington Post report said half the gain in third quarter resulted from the rebuilding of inventories; in the second quarter, only about one-

third of the period's 9.7 percent growth rate was attributed to this activity.

B. Jay Cooper, spokesman for the department, said there had also been "several instances of premature release of information" from other reports.

The department earlier this week considered moving the release time for the report due Friday on August's leading economic indicators to before the stock markets open. Department officials said they were told the July figure had been known to a market trader before its release time of 10 A.M., Eastern daylight time.